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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the topic of "ends" in John Dewey's educational theories. It deals with the shift from "capacity" to "potentiality" in Dewey's conception of the learner, revealing that Dewey became aware of flaws in his "Democracy and Education" and sought to correct them. One of the motivations behind much of his later work was developing a more adequate understanding of the relationship of individual powers and educational ends. Dewey's shift to the conception of "ideal ends" was addressed in his metaphysical exploration of the topic of ends, the shift from the notion of capacity to the notion of potentiality, and the development of a theory of imagination and philosophical vision which increases the importance of art in practical affairs. Interpretation of Dewey's later works leads to the conclusions that each individual has a multitude of potentialities which become operational only when opportunities are available for exposure to specific features of the environment, that each individual has the obligation of imagining the ideal ends which are pertinent to both personal and environmental conditions, and that the schools' challenge is to help youngsters increase their ability to imagine pertinent ideal ends. (Contains 11 references.) (JDD)

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Ideal Ends

John Dewey's Later Vision for Education

A Paper Presented to the
American Educational Research Association
and the
John Dewey Society
at their annual meeting
New Orleans, April 1994

by Craig A. Cunningham

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Imagination of ideal ends
pertinent to actual conditions
represents the fruition
of a disciplined mind.

-John Dewey, 1934[1]

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the topic of "ends" in John Dewey's educational theories. Specifically, it deals with the shift from "capacity" to "potentiality" in Dewey's conception of the learner. This shift shows: (1) Dewey altered his view of ends as his philosophy matured beyond *Democracy and Education*; and (2) these alterations have significant implications for how we should interpret Dewey's educational ideas. My thesis supports the claim by Hofstadter (1966) and others that the educational theory set forth in *Democracy and Education* is flawed; I further argue that Dewey became aware of these flaws and sought to correct them as he explored metaphysical issues some of his later works. While Dewey never explicitly revised the educational theory set forth in *Democracy and Education*, I will show that he did give his readers some clues as to what a reconstructed later educational theory might look like.

The most common conception of John Dewey's work on education is that following his conversion from Hegelian Idealism, he presented a remarkably consistent notion of the processes, structures, and functions of education. This view holds that

[1] LW 9: 35. References to Dewey's works are in the standard form for the Collected Works published by Southern Illinois University Press, and refer to the series, the volume, and the page.

Dewey's explicit work on education—beginning with *The School and the Society* in 1900 and continuing through *Experience and Education* in 1938—sets forth what may be termed "the Deweyan theory of education," and that whatever alterations Dewey made in this basic theory were at most tinkering with the margins. Dewey himself fostered the view that his 1916 *Democracy and Education* was not only the best statement of his educational view but also the best summary of his "entire philosophical position" and "for many years that in which my philosophy, such as it is, was most fully expounded" (1930; LW 5: 156).[2] *Experience and Education*—written more than twenty years after the 1916 classic—is in some respects nothing but a strong reiteration of the earlier theory, despite the fact that Dewey had in the intervening years written some profoundly important texts which alter the philosophical outlook of his middle period. Upon closer analysis, however, Dewey implies in *Experience and Education* and elsewhere in his later works that the educational theory set forth in *Democracy in Education* is inadequate when viewed in the light of the intervening development of his general philosophical outlook.

During the period beginning with the publication of *Experience and Nature* in 1925 and running through *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* in 1938, Dewey published a number of highly important philosophical works which indicate a shift from the pure instrumentalism of *Democracy and Education* toward a greater acceptance of the formed quality of raw experience. Boisvert (1988) calls this later perspective "naturalism" to

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[2] Dewey also claimed in the same paragraph that he could not "write an account of [his] intellectual development without giving it the semblance of a continuity that it does not in fact own." Dewey's own attitude toward his life's work seems to be that while there are some common themes and problems, his approach continually evolved with his own experience and maturity.

draw attention to the heightened importance of the *nature* pole of the experience/nature continuum and to distinguish it from the "experimentalism" of the period in which *Democracy and Education* was written.

This paper suggests one of the ways in which this later naturalism should have led Dewey to adjust his thinking about education. I argue that Dewey's later educational thinking—had it been made explicit—would not be entirely continuous with the theories set forth in *Democracy and Education* and earlier. Joe Burnett made some strides in this direction with his 1988 article "Dewey's Educational Thought and His Mature Philosophy." Burnett writes: "Dewey never fully integrated into his educational thought some of the important philosophical perspectives that were mainly the product of his later years, and I suspect that we in education are the poorer for that" (1988, 203). Burnett focuses on Dewey's later emphasis on aesthetic and religious experience and the increasing radicalism of his liberal philosophy. Burnett's highlighted differences reveal alterations in the ways Dewey perceived nature and experience—alterations which are connected with the topic of "ends" and which involve the topic of metaphysics. These metaphysical changes both explain the sorts of educational discontinuities suggested by Burnett and imply additional alterations which this paper begins to explore.

As I mentioned at the start, my analysis of the evolution of Dewey's thinking will focus on the concept of "end." In Dewey's later work, this concept is explored not only in terms of its role in providing aim and purpose to human behavior—as it is quite explicitly in *Democracy and Education*—but also in terms of its role in the nature of being. Dewey's exploration—especially in *Experience and Nature*—of metaphysics as the "generic traits manifested by existences of all kinds" (LW 1: 308) has deep implications

for how he conceives of ends. Specifically, Dewey's exploration of what he calls "natural teleology" results in a conception of ends which is far superior to the "experimentalist" conception set forth in Dewey's middle period.

The implications of this study include the possibility that we need to reevaluate Dewey's stance on certain aspects of schooling. Specifically, I suggest we need to take a more profound view of the school's role in the development of *imagination*—not to produce flights of fancy, but to assist students to develop more "pertinent" ideals. (This thesis is supported in Alexander 1987 and Johnson 1993). Perhaps also we need to take more seriously the common criticisms of *Democracy and Education*, and admit that this 1916 work is flawed—not only as a stand-alone theory of education, but as an indication of Dewey's best thinking.

ENDS IN DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

This section discusses the conception of ends propounded in *Democracy and Education*. It is helpful, I think, to see this middle-period educational theory as a transition between Dewey's early idealism and his later naturalism. This perspective will keep readers from treating *Democracy and Education* as a completed theory, and will support my effort to show that Dewey's later philosophical ruminations have consequences for his theories of education.

I will first summarize my theses about *Democracy and Education* and then provide a more detailed discussion. The first deals with the *identification* of ends and the second--a corollary of the first--with the notion of *capacity*.

Ends. Dewey's concentration on *democracy* in his middle period—a trend which emerged out of the work of the early period and which was the natural consequence of his effort to develop a unified theory of experience—reflects a moral faith that human societies and individuals are structured such that the development of one necessarily

promotes the development of the other--that is, such that societal progress and individual growth are necessarily linked. Specifically, Dewey believed that the capacities of individuals were *naturally* and *inevitably* such that their realization would lead to a more harmonious social order and, further, that the realization of the full spectrum of the capacities of a child would result in a harmonious, whole self. This faith, I argue, led Dewey to fail to discuss adequately the role of individual and social ideal-formation which he later came to see as the primary goal of education. Since the ends of education were in some sense predetermined (by the capacities of the learners), the process of *identifying* ends (which Dewey saw as a function of science) received far more emphasis in *Democracy and Education* than the process of *choosing* ends (which Dewey saw then and later as a function of imagination).

Capacity. In 1916 Dewey was still under the spell of the functional psychology he worked out in the 1890s as a replacement for his idealistic metaphysics. This is reflected in his repeated use in *Democracy and Education* (1916) of the word "capacity" to designate the condition in the learner which both makes education possible and which allows the teacher to design the educational experience appropriately. The use of the word "capacity" indicates a continuing residue of the idealism's view that the ends (functions) of processes are inherent in the structures involved.[3] Thus, while Dewey speaks in *Democracy and Education* of education as an individualized, local, and open-ended affair, he actually believes that "good" education was pre-determined by the capacities of the children (which are necessarily fulfilled by the progressive realization of social democracy). As we shall see later, Dewey was by the 1930s to abandon the notion

[3] This use of the notion of capacity in *Democracy and Education* and else in the middle-period works also raises questions about Boisvert's characterization of Dewey's outlook during this time as "experimentalist." Support for this argument will have to await another time.

of capacity and replace it with a reconstructed notion of "potentiality." This switch is at least in part a consequence of Dewey's articulation of metaphysics in the 1920s.

FAITH IN THE SOCIAL ORDER OF ENDS

In *Anti-Intellectualism in America*—a book whose portrayal of John Dewey is mostly unsympathetic and at least partly misguided—Richard Hofstadter identifies a paradox in *Democracy and Education* which is overstated but which yet rings true. Quoting *Democracy and Education,* Hofstadter writes:

> "We may produce in schools a projection in type of the society we should like to realize, and by forming minds in accordance with it gradually modify the larger and more recalcitrant features of adult society." This sentence expresses in brief the essence of Dewey's demand on the schools in behalf of democracy, and at the same time shows a central difficulty in his educational philosophy: he was obliged to assume that there is a kind of pre-established harmony between the needs and interests of the child and "the society we should like to realize." Otherwise it would be necessary either to sacrifice the ideal of education as growth or abandon the goal of "forming minds" in accordance with an adult, and hence externally imposed, vision of the good society (1966, 378-9)

Hofstadter claims that Dewey displays an unsupported faith in a "pre-established harmony" between the individual and the society which ensures that "a proper education, though focused on the self-realization of the individual child, would also automatically work toward the fulfillment and salvation of democratic society" (ibid., 365). In other words, the development of the one will inevitably lead to the development of the other. I contend that Hofstadter is right about Dewey's faith, and also about the fact that this faith is unsupported. Hofstadter also claims that the primary reason Dewey was so widely misinterpreted (a fact freely admitted by Dewey in his *Experience and Education*) was not so much a matter of writing style or lack of clarity, but was a symptom of "real ambiguities and gaps in thought, which themselves express certain difficulties and unresolved problems in educational theory and in our culture" (ibid., 361). I think Hofstadter is right about this as well, and that one of the core areas of ambiguity is in the relationship between ends and capacities which I explore in this paper.

By the time of *Democracy and Education* Dewey had realized the importance of carefully distinguishing between ends *per se* (as the conclusions, terminations, and closings of events) and *ends-in-view* (as the *desired* outcomes of events; that is, the aims of persons involved in events). The attempt to make this distinction was part of Dewey's effort to free himself further from his earlier idealism, in which he had held that the end of any event was an end-in-view (in his later sense) of the Absolute Spirit in whose Mind the universe evolves. Individuals, who possessed a fragment of this universal mind, were also tied into these ends-in-view, if they allowed themselves to become infused with the Spirit. This sort of transcendental teleology became quite distasteful for Dewey during the 1890s, and by the turn of the century, he had abandoned the notion that ends and ends-in-view were related through the intervention of absolute intelligence. There was no metaphysical or spiritual link between the affairs of nature and mind; mind, rather, was a *function* of nature which was certainly able to affect affairs but did not in any sense predetermine them.

Dewey's middle period experimentalism included a theory of learning in which mind was the "intentional purposeful activity controlled by perception of facts and their relationships to one another" (MW 9: 110) This conception of mind was intricately related to Dewey's pragmatism, in which *learning* arises because some activities lead to success while others lead to failure. As Robert Westbrook (1991) writes:

> Life was a struggle in which the organism used whatever means it had at its disposal to "change the changes going on around it" to further its self-preservation and self-realization... Dewey was careful to emphasize that undergoing or "adjustment" was not a passive stance but an active intervention in the environment... The agent-patient of experience "lived forward" for adjustment was an ongoing process requiring an eye to the future. In this view, "success and failure are the primary 'categories' of life; achieving of good and averting of ill are its supreme interest; hope and anxiety (which are not self-enclosed states of feeling, but active attitudes of welcome and wariness) are dominant qualities of experience" (p. 127; quoting MW 10:7-10).

According to this pragmatic view of experience, progress is achieved by dealing with the situations presented such that good is achieved; that is, such that success predominates over failure.

Under this pragmatic/experimentalist conception of learning, mind "is capacity to refer present conditions to future results, and future consequences to present conditions" (MW 9: 110). As I shall discuss in a moment, the notion of "capacity" is central to the theory Dewey sets forth in *Democracy and Education*. For the moment, what is important is to see that this pragmatic theory separated the identification of the *aims*—"ends-in-view"—of agents from the identification of ends—terminations or conclusions—of processes. Mind is no longer the causal link between intelligence and natural results.

However, Dewey did not, in *Democracy and Education*, succeed in completely separating ends-in-view from ends *per se*. This is because—despite his abandonment of idealism and adherence to pragmatism—Dewey continued to hold the "ends" of nature as something more exalted than mere endings or terminations, as somehow superior to "mere *results*." An end "completes or fulfills what went before it"; whereas a mere result has nothing about it that is fulfilling:

> Any exhibition of energy has results. The wind blows about the sands of the desert; the position of the grains in changed. Here is a result, an effect, but not an *end*. For there is nothing in the outcome which completes or fulfills what went before it. There is mere spatial redistribution. One state of affairs is just as good as any other. Consequently there is no basis upon which to select an earlier state of affairs as a beginning, a later as an end, and to consider what intervenes as a process of transformation and realization (MW 9: 107-8).

This concept of end as "realization" is at the root of the flaw identified by Hofstadter. Before I explain this further, I need to say a few things about the concept of "capacity."

Ends Determined by Capacity

I mentioned just above that "mind" for Dewey is a "capacity." The notion that individuals possess various capacities is at the core of Dewey's conception of the learner in *Democracy and Education*. What is it, he asks, about the student which makes it

possible for education to take place? This question takes us into an exploration of Dewey's overall view of human nature—his view of the self, or "moral ontology" (Taylor 1989).

The most crucial aspect of Dewey's moral ontology is that he sees the self as continually in formation; it is "not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action" (MW 9: 361).[4] Despite this reluctance to see the self as something ready-made or even *ever* made, Dewey does not hold that there is *no* structure to the self. The self is not re-formed from moment to moment out of whole cloth. Rather, an individual brings to the learning situation something from her past, consisting in part of native capacities and in part of the dispositional residues of prior experiences. The most interesting thing about this for Dewey is that the individual *can* "retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation." This retention-ability is a native quality or capacity found in all persons: the "power to *develop dispositions*" (MW 9: 49). Without this power, learning would not be possible.

Dewey writes of "the present powers of the pupil" as the "initial stage" of learning. The human child possesses a "*multitude* of instinctive tentative reactions" (ibid., 50) which make it possible for learning to take place. For the teacher does not supply the motive

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[4] Indeed, the "self" is more like a "function" or *end* for Dewey than it is a structure or form. This is seen most clearly in his repeated use, in his early and middle ethical theories, of the notion of "self-realization." For example, in the 1908 Ethics, Dewey writes: "The end, the right and only end, of man lies in the fullest and freest realization of powers in their appropriate objects" (MW 5: 273). Self-realization is not an "end" is the sense of a "mere result"—a termination or conclusion; rather it is an "end" in the sense of the "purpose" or "aim." As Dewey would later realize, "self-realization" is *actually* never an end at all, because no self is ever fully realized. The individual never *arrives* at realization; rather, self-realization represents the eternal end of a continuos *process*. In that sense, it is more like an "ideal" than an end. As I will argue below, it was important for Dewey to begin to deal with the notion of "ideals" in order to save his experimentalism from his unsupported faith.

force for the learning process; this is, rather, intrinsic in the learner, whose "vital energy seeking opportunity for effective exercise" (ibid., 72) is the "essence" of education. This "vital energy" appears operationally as the "power to develop dispositions." This power is comprehended in the concept of "capacity," a crucial notion for understanding Dewey's notions about learners. The word and its analogues appears numerous times in *Democracy and Education*, so much so that an argument could be made that, next to the concept of "democracy" itself, "capacity" is the central notion of the book.[5] A sample of its appearances (all from MW 9) will demonstrate its importance and also help me place the word in its proper context:

> With the growth of civilization, the gap between the original **capacities** of the immature and the standards and customs of the elders increases (6).
>
> A child growing up in a family of musicians will inevitably have whatever **capacities** he has in music stimulated, and, relatively, stimulated more than other impulses which might have been awakened in another environment (20).
>
> What conscious, deliberate teaching can do is at most to free the **capacities** thus formed for fuller exercise, to purge them of some of their grossness, and to furnish objects which make their activity more productive of meaning (21).
>
> We have already noted that plasticity is the **capacity** to retain and carry over from prior experience factors which modify subsequent activities. This signifies the **capacity** to acquire habits, or develop definite dispositions (51).
>
> If the environment, in school and out, supplies conditions which utilized adequately the present **capacities** of the immature, the future which grows out of the present is surely taken care of (61).[6]

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[5] This fact has not been sufficiently noted. Numerous commentators and explicators of Dewey's theories do mention the notion of capacity and its analogues—possibility and potentiality as well as those just mentioned—in passing. For example, Nathanson writes that for Dewey "the educational process [is] primarily a matter of discovering our possibilities and of devising methods that we help us both to discover and develop them" (Nathanson 1951, 75). But no writer, to my knowledge, has argued that the educational theory of *Democracy and Education* is based upon the concept of capacity.

[6] This quote relates to Dewey's faith in a pre-established harmony, as criticized by Hofstadter.

> [In a despotic state] many other **capacities** are left untouched. Or rather, they are affected, but in such a way as to pervert them. Instead of operating on their own account they are reduced to mere servants of attaining pleasure and avoiding pain (90).
>
> The widening of the area of shared concerns, and the liberation of a greater diversity of personal **capacities** which characterize a democracy... (93).
>
> ...education as a freeing of individual **capacity** in a progressive growth directed to social aims (105).
>
> ...the object and reward of learning is continued **capacity** for growth (107).
>
> Mind is **capacity** to refer present conditions to future results, and future consequences to present conditions.... A man is imperfectly intelligent when he...forms plans apart from study of the actual conditions, including his own **capacities** (110).
>
> A democratic criterion requires us to develop **capacity** to the point of competency to choose and make its own career (126).
>
> ...ultimately social efficiency means neither more nor less than **capacity** to share in a give and take of experience (127).
>
> ...if democracy has a moral and ideal meaning, it is that a social return be demanded from all and that opportunity for development of distinctive **capacities** be afforded all (129)
>
> There is an old saying to the effect that it is not enough for a man to be good; he must be good for something. The something for which man must be good is **capacity** to live as a social member so that what he gets from living with others balances what he contributes.... Discipline, culture, social efficiency, personal refinement, improvement of character are but phases of the growth of **capacity** nobly to share in such a balanced experience. And education is not a mere means to such a life. Education is such a life. To maintain **capacity** for such education is the essence of morals. For conscious life is a continual beginning afresh (369-70).

This sample (and Dewey's other uses of the word "capacity") reveal several things about the notion of capacity in *Democracy and Education*. First, we see that education is defined throughout the book as the "freeing" of the capacities of learners. Both the process of education and the *function* or end of education are the freeing of capacities. (The fact that the process and the function are identical should not be surprising, given Dewey's contention that in all worthwhile activities, "the end should be intrinsic to the

action; it should be *its* end—a part of its own course" [MW 9: 212]. More on this in a moment.) Dewey describes this "freeing" with several different words, including "realization," "liberation," "development," and "maintenance." Always there is the underlying faith that capacity is the one thing about people that is most valuable, most good.

The second thing to note about Dewey's use of the word "capacity" is that he always uses it in its active or positive sense. Dewey writes:

> It is noteworthy that the terms "capacity" and "potentiality" have a double meaning, one sense being negative, the other positive. Capacity may denote mere receptivity, like the capacity of a quart measure. We may mean by potentiality a merely dormant or quiescent state--a capacity to become something different under external influences. But we also mean by capacity an ability, a power; and, by potentiality potency, force (MW 9 46).[7]

On first glance at the samples above, Dewey apparently uses "capacity" in both its meanings. When he speaks of "original capacities," he appears to be referring to "receptivity" to some skill or learning outcome. When he speaks of "capacities thus formed," he appears to be referring to an acquired ability. Is a capacity "mere receptivity" if it is inherited and "ability, power" if it is acquired? I don't think so. As I noted, Dewey thinks of the child as having a "power to form dispositions." Which type of capacity is this? Is it a "receptivity" or an "ability"?

I don't think Dewey ever intends in *Democracy and Education* to use "capacity" in its passive, receptive sense. Even an infant, he believed, possesses active abilities. He strongly criticizes the idea of "the merely privative nature of immaturity," (MW 9: 55) and argues, instead, for a view of immaturity--and its attendant dependence and plasticity--as a *positive* quality with native powers which make it possible for learning to take place. The

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[7] Note here that Dewey defines both capacity and potentiality; but elsewhere in *Democracy and Education* he exclusively uses the word "capacity," and even here, he defines "potentiality" *as* a capacity. Later, Dewey would gradually move from the word "capacity" *to* the word potentiality. I will explore this shift later in this paper.

word "capacity" tends to carry this active connotation even when nothing specific seems to have happened to "create" the capacity.

This brings us to the third aspect of Dewey's notion of capacity: its relationship to the notion of heredity. Dewey acknowledges the importance of the "original endowment of an individual" as the particular "equipment of native activities" which a person possesses from birth (MW 9: 80). What Dewey denies vehemently, however, is that the specific inheritance of any one individual "predetermines its future use" (ibid.). Educators, instead, need to be concerned with the "best" utilization of the inheritance that is there. If we conceive of the inheritance--as Dewey is wont to do--as a set of capacities, then the educator's function or aim is to realize those capacities in the most fulfilling manner. Thus, rather than precisely determining a person's end--that is, the most fulfilling realization of her extant capacities--the inheritance only defines the limits or boundaries of the end. The educator

> cannot utilize what is not there.... In this sense, heredity is a limit of education. Recognition of this fact prevents the waste of energy and the irritation that ensue from the too prevalent habit of trying to make by instruction something out of an individual which he is not naturally fitted to become. But the doctrine does not determine what use shall be made of the capacities which exist. And, except in the case of the imbecile, these original capacities are much more varied and potential, even in the case of the more stupid, than we as yet know properly how to utilize. Consequently, while a careful study of the native aptitudes and deficiencies of an individual is always a preliminary necessity, the subsequent and important step is to furnish an environment which will adequately function whatever activities are present (ibid.).

Dewey is saying that original endowment or inheritance does not ***determine*** what any one individual will be able to do—at least not in a practical sense, because we do not "as yet know properly how to utilize" the full range of an individual's original capacities. Further, the original inheritance is *not* equivalent to the person's *present* capacities; these latter include not only the residue of the original endowment but also *acquired* capacities—dispositions—and interests, which are related not only to original endowment but even more strongly to past experiences. However, since only a conclusion which "completes or

fulfills" what came before it deserves the title of "end" instead of "mere result," these capacities—original and acquired—do in some sense "determine" the end; the "best utilization" is not something imposed from without, but rather something which "functions" "whatever activities are present" in the learner prior the current educational situation.

This leads to the fourth aspect of Dewey's use of the word "capacity" which I want to discuss: its relation to aims, or ends-in-view. Dewey holds that the only true aim of education is the creation of capacity for more education. Growth does not *have* an end; it *is* an end in and of itself. Dewey is intensely critical of the common conception that the purpose of education is to prepare the child for the adult world. Such a view, he claims, not only ignores the actual capacities of the learner but assumes that the adult order of things has some superior status such that all other possible orders are precluded. Dewey wants a more open conception of society which allows for the possibility that new institutional and personal structures will emerge--structures which will more fully allow the capacities of people to be expressed or fulfilled.

Democracy, Dewey believes, is precisely this open form of social life in which "native individual capacities" are most efficiently turned into competencies through "positive use...in occupations having a social meaning" (MW 9 125). The primary feature of a non-democratic or "despotically governed state", on the contrary, is that capacities are "left untouched," that is, *not* turned into competencies. This happens, Dewey contends, whenever aims do not "belong within the process in which they operate" but are, rather, "set up from without."

> And the latter state of affairs must obtain when social relationships are not equitably balanced. For in that case, some portions of the whole social group will find their aims determined by an external dictation; their aims will not arise from the free growth of their own experience, and their nominal aims will be means to more ulterior ends of others rather than truly their own (MW 9: 89).

The distinction between an aim which emerges "from the free growth" of a person's "own experience" and one that is imposed from outside is crucial to Dewey's faith in democracy, and it is also crucial for understanding how the concept of "capacity" relates to Dewey's conception of ends. As mentioned above, Dewey draws a distinction between a "mere result" and an end. The crucial difference is whether the outcome "completes or fulfills what went before it." In education the crucial test is whether the outcome is "furnished from without" or emerges out of the activities of the child. When an aim emerges out of an activity, the outcome *does* "complete" or "fulfill" what went before it. There *is* a "basis upon which to select an earlier state of affairs as a beginning, a later as an end, and to consider what intervenes as a process of transformation and realization" (MW 9: 107-8).

What I want to stress here is that in *Democracy and Education* Dewey wants the *aims* of educators to arise out of the "intrinsic activities and needs" (including original instincts and acquired habits) "of the given individual to be educated" (MW 9: 114)—i.e., out of his capacities—rather than some outside source, and that *if* the educator's aims are so generated, then, Dewey believes, the *ends* of the educational process will "complete" and "fulfill" what went before--i.e. the capacities. Then, also, the educational process will be a "transformation" and "realization" and not simply a progression from one state of affairs to another. The educational process which succeeds in becoming such a transformation and realization for any specific learner will be one which creates an *environment* which "liberates and organizes" the specific capacities of that learner (MW 9: 115).

"The problem of teaching," Dewey wrote, "is to keep the experience of the student moving in the direction of what the expert already knows. Hence the need that the teacher know both subject matter and the characteristic needs and capacities of the student" (MW 9: 191-92). The teacher's function, Dewey believed, was to manipulate the environment such that the student would naturally fulfill his or her capacities. The teacher's primary

guide in knowing what these fulfillments were--that is, in knowing what possible outcomes there are for the educational situation--is subject-matter.

Teachers, in order to teach, must "create an environment in the classroom in which they possessed the means to 'mediate' [the children's] capacities 'over into habits of social intelligence and responsiveness.' Dewey was calling upon teachers to artfully arrange things in the classroom so that 'the right social growth' could be assured..." (Westbrook 1991, 108-9; quoting Dewey 1897; EW 5:94-95). Or, as Dewey writes in *Human Nature and Conduct*, "To foster conditions that widen the horizon of others and give them command of their own powers, so that they can find their own happiness in their own fashion, is the way of "social" action. (MW 14, 202-203).

The flaw in this conception, as far as I see it, is the assumption that individual capacities are organized in such a way that giving them "command of their own powers" will *naturally* or *inevitably* leads to not only a better society, but a :"fulfilled" (in the sense of happy, content, and socially acceptable) individual. Besides the fact that Dewey supplies no empirical basis for this assumption, I think it has a pernicious effect upon the development of educational objectives. Rather than putting upon adult society (teachers and parents) the ethical burden of *developing* educational aims which are worthy, Dewey's notion of capacity in *Democracy and Education* urges them to study their children and *identify* the ends which are intrinsic. Education, then, merely becomes a *technique* for "fulfilling" the ends which are already there.[8]

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[8] This relates to a central theoretical difficulty with the concept of capacity, one which relates to the modern notion of "zone of proximal development." How do we define the realm of possibility? As an example, suppose we are judging the capacity of a group of five-year-olds to become Olympic speed skaters. Is it, we ask, within the capacity of each youngster to achieve world-class skating skills? How do we know? Surely some youngsters will have stronger skating skills than others; but the ones who have not had any experience with skating may still turn out to be excellent skaters provided the opportunity. To say one youngster has the "original capacity" to skate at world-class levels whereas another does not is surely ridiculous; no five-year-old has the *ability* to do so and each (except perhaps those born with certain genetic defects) probably could do it

It is understandable that Dewey would develop this conception of the relationship between capacity and educational ends. He was resisting at least two strands of educational thought which—he believed—had disastrous effects on children. The first was the traditional view that educational ends should be developed completely outside the children themselves, whether out of the tradition or out of the needs of adult society. The second was the emerging, romantic view that the child somehow "knew" her own interests and that all adults should do is stand by ready to supply the child with the resources which her interests demanded. Dewey wanted adults to have a role in "steering" the child's interests toward "ends" which were somehow less subjective or whimsical. The notion of capacity—with its "natural" location within the child instead of external to it, and its seemingly objective, even scientific, quality—was Dewey's middle ground. Unfortunately, I think it was an erroneous way out of the dilemma. I think Dewey realized that as his thought matured, and developed an alternative way of dealing with the problem. That is the thesis of the next section.

SHIFTS IN THE LATER WORKS

Some of the difficulties with the notion that a child's capacities determine (or ought to determine) the aims or purposes of education are explored in Israel Scheffler's 1985 essay *On Human Potential*. While Scheffler does not distinguished between capacity and potentiality (something which Dewey does do at least implicitly), I think it is helpful to pause a moment and note several misconceptions about human potential which Scheffler so ably identifies. (Scheffler calls these misconceptions "myths," which is a word

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with enough practice. The issue is whether in any particular youngster's case the *end* of skating at world-class levels is deemed worthy enough to put in the time and effort. The issue is one of *choice*, not *identification*, of ends.

I hate to see ruined by always associating it with things that are empirically false, so I will call them misconceptions.)

Scheffler's three misconceptions are that potentials are fixed, that they are mutually harmonious, and that they are equally valuable. While Dewey's theory of capacity in *Democracy and Education* denies the notion of capacity as "fixed"—since Dewey is so vehement about the importance of *acquired* capacities—the theory does suffer from the latter two misconceptions. Dewey not only assumes that all of the capacities of a given individual are mutually harmonious, but that all the capacities of *all* individuals are mutually harmonious; indeed, as I have shown, Dewey identifies his perfect social order—democracy—with the maximal realization of everyone's capacities. Dewey further displays the misconception of equal value in refusing to deal adequately with the question of how adults (parents and teachers) should *decide* which of a child's capacities to develop. He does make a few steps in this direction—specifically in his discussion of how the teacher needs to mediate the capacities of the child through the "subject-matter" of the expert—but, as Hofstadter points out, Dewey fails miserably in providing the practical advice which curriculum developers need in making decisions about the desired outcomes of learner. (Dewey's whole theory seems aimed *against* the notion that we can develop curriculum in advance, apart from our interaction with specific children. This is a direct bias against the ways in which most educational institutions actually work, and it has resulted in an unfortunate marginalization of his educational theories.)

This section is based on the supposition that Dewey *knew* something about these and other inadequacies of the theory set forth in *Democracy and Education* and that one of the motivations behind much of his later philosophical work was developing a more adequate understanding of the relationship of individual powers and educational ends. This more adequate understanding coheres around the notion of "ideal ends" which is mentioned in the quote at the beginning of this paper. Dewey's shift to this conception had at least three prongs: his metaphysical exploration of the topic of ends; a shift from the

notion of capacity to the notion of potentiality; and the development of a theory of imagination and philosophical vision which increases the importance of art in practical affairs. The last of these prongs has been explored in some detail by Joe Burnett, Tom Alexander, and Mark Johnson, so I will focus here on the first two.

FOCUS ON IDEALS

Throughout his career, Dewey's work was infused with a profound idealism about the possibilities for the future of humanity. In his early period, this idealism found support in the metaphysics of Hegel in which progress was an inevitable feature of the very structure of the universe. Ideals, on this early conception, were the motive force behind everything that happened. Once Dewey had abandoned this metaphysics, his idealism was transferred to a faith in science and ability of the social sciences to form social institutions which would increasingly provide opportunities for the common person to fulfill her capacities. The concept of ideals receded into the background to be replaced with a less "metaphysical" conception of ends, purposes, and aims. A sort of "scientific" idealism infuses *Democracy and Education;* its apparent naiveté from our contemporary perspective is one of the reasons that book is presently treated more as an artifact of history than as a guide to practical education. This middle-period faith in progress would be deeply shaken by the experience of World War I and its aftermath. Stephen Rockefeller puts it well:

> As early as 1916 [Dewey] confessed in the first person plural that in the light of the world war, the liberals' optimistic faith in progress must be seen as sentimental, naive, and irresponsible....[T]here is no cosmic law of evolution guaranteeing automatic human progress in history. The development of industry and commerce, the production of wealth, and the advance of the sciences do not of themselves insure moral growth and material well-being for society as a whole. They may lead to exploitation, poverty, war (Rockefeller 1991, 306-7).

Upon the conclusion of the war, and in partial reaction to the explicit criticisms of Randolph Bourne and others, Dewey admitted explicitly that the assumptions upon which

he and the rest of America had based much of their pre-war work (including *Democracy and Education*) were naive:

> The ideals of the United States have been defeated because we took into the war ...our evangelical hypocrisy that morals and "ideals" have a self-propelling and self-executing capacity... Immaturity and inexperience...mitigate the blame. But they would not have taken the form they took were it not for our traditional evangelical trust in morals apart from intelligence, and in ideals apart from executive and engineering force..." (MW 11: 181-82).

As Sleeper puts it, by the time this passage was written, Dewey "was ready to reject the whole idea of moral evolution as aimed, in the fashion of Peirce's doctrine of 'Lamarckist' evolution, at the ultimate *telos* of the fulfilled individual. Progress is no longer an assumption but a problem" (Sleeper 1986, 178). The development of a better society, Dewey now admitted, required practical intelligence—"executive and engineering force"—which in turn required a more careful look at the actual existences of the world. Rockefeller continues:

> Reflecting on the war experience and the problem of sentimental idealism. Dewey in 1919 criticized traditional philosophy as well as liberal Christianity for maintaining a false notion of the ideal, for imagining that ideals exist "independent of the possibilities of the material and physical." The lesson of World War I is "the impotency and harmfulness of any and every ideal that is proclaimed wholesale and in the abstract, that is, as something in itself apart from the detailed concrete existences whose moving possibilities it embodies." Perhaps with criticism like that of Bourne in mind, Dewey argued:
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> > "It is false that the evils of the situation arise from absence of ideals; they spring from wrong ideals. And these wrong ideals have in turn their foundation in the absence in social matters of that methodic, systematic, impartial, critical, searching inquiry into 'real' and operative conditions which we call science and which has brought man in the technical realm to the command of physical energies." (Rockefeller 1991, 308-309; quoting MW 12: 154).

In the immediate post-war period, Dewey still maintained that it was *science* which would provide the salvation for "wrong ideals." He still believed in the possibility of the social sciences—specifically psychology and sociology—providing information about "real and operative conditions" in such a way that aims would not be "either illusions or mere

emotional compensations" (MW 12: 155). Dewey was still suffering from an illusion himself; that all that was necessary was that policy-makers and others who have an effect upon the future look more carefully at *what is there* and develop their ability to determine from what is there what ought to be. It was this same illusion which led Dewey himself to place so much importance of the capacities of children.

For Dewey to make the required shift away from this scientistic view of the development of ends it was required that he himself examine more carefully his own assumptions about "what is there." His excursions in metaphysics in the 1920s and 1930s provided this opportunity. By really paying attention to *what is there* Dewey began to realize that the generation of ideals was not so much an automatic process of identifying the ends inherent within activities as it was a matter of *imagination*: projecting possible ends and deciding—on the basis of desires—which ends to pursue.

Ends in Later Metaphysics

Dewey's turn to metaphysics in the 1920s has been a source of profound controversy among Dewey scholars. Some, led by Richard Rorty (1977), have tended to see this turn as a "mistake" in which Dewey let his enthusiasm for the development of a philosophical *system* draw him away from his sensible antifoundationalism. Others, especially Ralph Sleeper and Raymond Boisvert, have seen this turn to metaphysics a sensible step in the creation of a *better* antifoundationalism. This is not the place to revisit this debate; let it suffice for now to say that I think Sleeper's view, that Dewey's metaphysics is a "background theory" and not a foundation of his philosophy—a theory which provides, as Dewey describes it, the "ground-map of the province of criticism"—is the right view of Dewey's metaphysics.

What is important for my purposes here is that Dewey uses his metaphysics to explore the topic of ends in some detail. This was due at least somewhat to the influence of F. J. E. Woodbridge, who had "worked out a version of Aristotelianism which replaced the Aristotelian categories of matter and form with the newer categories of structure and

activity while retaining Aristotle's notion of a natural teleology" (Dykhuizen 1973, 120). The concept of natural teleology allowed Dewey to continue to hold that ends are found in nature—as he wrote in *Experience and Nature*, "If experienced things are valid evidence, then nature in having qualities within itself has what in the literal sense must be called ends, terminals, arrests, enclosures" (LW 1:82)—but it also helped him to overcome the unsupported faith that the *right* ends were somehow determined by nature rather than through intelligent decision.

The key to this shift was two-fold. First, Dewey had to accept to a greater degree than he had during his experimentalist phase that nature is formed apart from experience. In focusing on the importance of change and uncertainty during his middle period (in partial response to the Darwinian revolution), Dewey had minimized the importance of form. The resurrection of form took place, as Boisvert explains so well, through the notion of "possibility." The concept of possibility is subtly different from the concept of "capacity"; these differences were crucial, however, for Dewey to escape the difficulties he had in separating the identification of ends from the process of decision-making. "Capacity," as Dewey used it, tended to indicate a future development which was necessary for the "realization" of the object containing the capacity. "Possibility" carries no such baggage of necessity: an object can have multiple "possibilities" without these possibilities in any way indicating which is of most worth.

The use of the term "possibility" helped Dewey to make the second aspect of the shift I am referring to. By seeing the forms of nature as possibilities—and by separating these possibilities from the criteria of worth or value—Dewey was able to reintroduce *ideals* into the world as objects of thought—truly "ends-*in-view*"—rather than as determining factors as they had been in his early period. As Westbrook writes:

> In saying that nature had ends and histories, Dewey was not (as many had) asserting that nature had purposes (ends-in-view) or that the ends of nature's histories were necessarily happy or progressive" ones... [I]t was only human beings that had ends-in-view, and it was only human reflection, deliberate choice, and directed effort that

> converted the terminations of natural histories into "conclusions and fulfillments" entitled to the "honorific status of completions and realizations" (Westbrook 1991, 332-33; quoting LW 1:86).

Dewey realized that in putting ends and forms-as-possibilities back into nature he was tempting the slippery slope in which Aristotle and his followers had assumed that natural events moved inexorably toward the fulfillment of transcendent predetermined *teloi*.

> Something much more neutral than any such implication is, however, meant.... Being an end may be indifferently an ecstatic culmination, a matter-of-fact consummation, or a deplorable tragedy. Which of these things a closing or terminal object is, has nothing to do with the property of being an end....Popular fiction and drama show the bias of human nature in favor of happy endings, but by being fiction and drama they show with even greater assurance that unhappy endings are natural events (LW 1: 81-3).

The admission that "unhappy endings" are natural events was a crucial and necessary feature of Dewey's abandonment of his pre-war idealism. No longer are "ends" so easily distinguishable from "mere results;" the crucial distinction is between an end which is "happy"—that is, *desired*—and one which is not. This marks the implicit rejection of his theory of capacity in *Democracy and Education*. It also highlights the crucial role of choice and deliberation in the selection of ideal ends.

POTENTIALITIES

Dewey never to my knowledge ever explicitly discuss his rejection of the notion of capacity. He does, however, say some positive things about moral ontology—or as Dewey describes it, "the ultimate structure of individual human nature" (LW 3: 142)—in his later writings which are consistent with the story I am developing here. Specifically, Dewey begins using the word "potentiality" when referring to individuals—a word which is closer to the "possibility" of his later metaphysics than is the word "capacity."

Rockefeller does a good job of discussing the connection between Dewey's later moral ontology and his metaphysics. Individuality, Dewey asserts, is given as a trait of

every existence. Rockefeller refers to this quote from Dewey's *Individualism, Old and New*:

> Individuality is a first spontaneous and unshaped; it is a potentiality, a capacity of development. Even so, it is a unique manner of acting in and with a world of objects and persons. It is not something complete in itself, like a closet in a house or a secret drawer in a desk, filled with treasures that are waiting to be bestowed on the world. Since individuality is a distinctive way of feeling the impacts of the world and of showing a preferential bias in response to these impacts, it develops into shape and form only through interaction with actual conditions; it is no more complete in itself than is a painter's tube of paint without relation to a canvas. The work of art is the truly individual thing; and it is the result of the interaction of paint and canvas through the medium of the artist's distinctive vision and power" (LW 5: 121).

Dewey's use of the word "capacity" here is not as the central feature of a self which is "realized" through growth, but rather merely as an appositive description of the word "potentiality." Potentiality is "not complete in itself"; it is only expressed "through interaction with actual conditions." As Rockefeller further quotes from Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct:*

> "Selfhood...is in process of making".... This is "an ongoing process" unless the self has been entrapped in mechanical routine. The self of the infant involves a multitude of instinctive tendencies and impulsive activities, which are originally blind and often conflicting, and which are only gradually coordinated and developed so as to enable the child to adapt to its environment. In this fashion the self or character of a child comes into being. The process of becoming or growth continues. Even in adults, human personality does not give evidence of a finished or fixed self. "Inconsistencies and shiftings in character are the commonest thing in experience." For Dewey, then, the self is a process, and he further argues that psychology cannot identify any fixed end toward which the process is evolving, which is not to deny that the self can and does develop ends and goals (Rockefeller 1991, 422-23; quoting MW 14: 95-98).

While Dewey had argued even in *Democracy and Education* that there is no "fixed end toward which the process is evolving," the quoted passages (and Rockefeller's exegesis) show Dewey rejecting the idea that capacities are realized and replaces it with the view of the original human self as being full of multiple, conflicting tendencies and activities. This model does not suggest to the teacher to determine ends out of a careful study of the ends implicit in these activities; rather, ends are something which humans need to *develop*.

In Dewey's 1939 essay "Time and Individuality," he provides what is probably his most explicit exploration of his mature moral ontology. The word "potentiality" is quite prominent. The fact growth *can* occur implies "that potentiality is a category of existence, for development cannot occur unless and individual has powers or capacities that are not actualized at a given time" (LW 14: 109; note again that Dewey uses the word "capacity" but only when called upon to describe what he means by "potentiality." Potentiality is the primary term.) Dewey implicitly rejects the theory he had earlier held regarding "capacity." He continues:

> While it is necessary to revive the category of potentiality as a characteristic of individuality, it has to be revived in a different form from that of its classic Aristotelian formulation. According to that view, potentialities are connected with a *fixed* end which the individual endeavors by its own nature or essence to actualize, although its success in actualization depended upon the cooperation of external things and hence might be thwarted by the "accidents" of its surroundings--as not every acorn becomes a tree and few if any acorns become the typical oak.
>
> When the idea of development is due to some indwelling end which tends to control the series of changes passed through it abandoned, potentialities must be thought of in terms of consequences of interactions with other things. Hence potentialities cannot be *known* till *after* the interactions have occurred.

Note that Dewey here specifically rejects the idea that potentialities can be known in advance. This contrasts quite markedly with his suggestion in *Democracy and Education* that teachers must come to know the capacities of their students and thereby determine the directions, or ends, or their growth. Dewey continues:

> There are at a given time unactualized potentialities in an individual because and in as far as there are in existence other things with which it has not yet interacted.... As things are brought by new procedures into new contacts and new interactions, new consequences are produced and the power to produce these new consequences is a recognized potentiality of the thing in question. The idea that potentialities are inherent and fixed by relation to a predetermined end was a product of a highly restricted state of technology. Because of this restriction, the only potentialities recognized were those consequences which were customary in the given state of culture and were accordingly taken to be "natural."... [T]he only reasonable conclusion is that potentialities are not fixed and intrinsic, but are a matter of an indefinite range of interactions in which an individual may engage. (LW 14: 109-10)

Here we have a very different conception of the learner than that set forth in *Democracy and Education*. No longer are the intrinsic "capacities" of the student the primary guide in the formation of ends; indeed, these capacities—now referred to as "potentialities"—are not even intrinsic; they are aspects of *interactions* between the learner and his or her environment.[9] On this revised view, the formation of educational ends must involve active decisions on the part of parents and teachers as to which possibilities are of most value, and also explicit attention to the development of adequate subject-matter and environmental conditions.

No longer can Dewey be fairly accused of giving inadequate attention to curriculum development. As he said in a 1928 speech to the Progressive Education Association,

> sometimes it seems to be thought that orderly organization of subject-matter is hostile to the needs of students in their individual character. But individuality is something developing and to be continuously attained, not something given all at once and ready-made. It is found only in life-history, in its continuing growth; it is, so to say, a career and not just a fact discoverable at a particular cross-section of life.....A child's individuality cannot be found in what he does or in what he consciously likes at a given moment; it can be found only in the connected course of his actions. Consciousness of desire and purpose can be genuinely attained only toward the close of some fairly prolonged sequence of activities. Consequently some organization of subject-matter reached through a serial or consecutive course of doings, held together within the unity of progressively growing occupation or project, is the only means which corresponds to real individuality (LW 3: 263-4).

This was the basic message of Dewey's 1938 *Experience and Education*: that adult choices and decisions as to which educational ends are most worthy—and concentrated attention to the development of organized activities designed to reach those ends—are crucial to the development of worthy individuals and a worthy society.

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[9] For more on Dewey's conception of the individual in terms of potentiality, see my "Unique Potential: A Metaphor for John Dewey's Later Conception of the Self," , forthcoming in *Educational Theory*.

Dewey's later work on value, ethics, aesthetics, and thinking provide further support for the kinds of choices that he believed to be necessary.

Intelligence and Choice

Most importantly, Dewey explicitly explored in the 1932 revision of his *Ethics* the crucial importance of *deliberation* in making decisions about ends. Values are spontaneously intuited—we find that we "like" or "desire" things all the time in everyday experience—but the determination of whether specific ends are valu*able* is one requiring "personal observation of consequences and cross-questioning of their quality and scope" as well as "scrupulous attention to the potentialities of any act or proposed aim" (LW 7: 272). Since potentialities cannot be ***known*** in advance, the person making a decision needs to use imagination to project the consequences of various choices.

"Imagination of ideal ends pertinent to actual conditions represents the fruition of a disciplined mind," Dewey wrote in his 1934 *A Common Faith*. Several key words in this sentence have already been explored: imagination; ideal; ends; conditions. The most crucial word, however, seems to be "pertinence." What is it that makes an "ideal end" *pertinent* to actual conditions? The word does not imply a direct immutable link between the ideal ends and the conditions. "Pertinence" is not as easy to see as the relation of "completion" or "fulfillment" which Dewey had built into his 1916 theory of the relationship between ends and capacities. "Pertinence" certainly means *some* connection or relationship. The *Shorter* OED defines "pertinent" as: "Appropriate, suitable in nature or character; relating to the matter in hand, relevant; to the point; apposite." The word "appropriate" seems to be a key synonym.

The kind of connection which Dewey is suggesting between ideal ends and conditions by his use of the word "pertinent" is similar to the kind of connection which exists between an element of a work of art and the work as a whole. The artist doesn't decide that the addition of a new element would be "appropriate" on the basis of objective

or scientific criteria; rather, as Dewey describes in his *Art as Experience*, it is a matter of *expressiveness*; the criteria are essentially personal and existential.[10]

Dewey captures the aesthetic aspects of these criteria in his shift to the use of the word "intelligence," which is

> seen as both analytical and synthetic, as imaginative and creative. It reaches back into past experience, and its consequences extend beyond both habit and social bias; it thus becomes the innovative power requisite for the holistic reconstructions envisaged.... It is the power to reflect on past experience and then use it to reconstruct the present and shape the future; it is the power to analyze ends and means and generic conditions in relation to intentional purposes.... (Sleeper 1986, 179-80).

On this view of intelligence, knowing is no longer synonymous with scientific inquiry and analysis, but has become an *art*, concerned with synthesis and holism. Likewise, personal development is no longer seen as the realization of capacities which were originally or intrinsically there, but rather in terms of the essentially aesthetic criteria of "wholeheartedness," "inclusiveness," and "single-mindedness." "[T]he good self was constantly refashioning itself into a more complex, internally differentiated yet harmonious unity, into a work of art" (Westbrook 1991, 416). This artistic shift applied not only to personal development but the development of societies. "Democracy was the social ideal not only because it nurtured individual growth but because it envisioned a growing community that would itself be a complex, organic work of art, harmonizing 'the development of each individual with the maintenance of a social state in which the activities of one will contribute to the good of all the others'" (ibid.; quoting LW 7: 350).

Conclusion

Dewey's substitution of aesthetic criteria of growth and social progress for the supposedly scientific criteria of the realization of intrinsic capacities is an effective antidote

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[10] For more on how Dewey's conception fits into a larger cultural context of "expressiveness," see Taylor 1988, especially page 181.

to the criticism of Hofstadter that Dewey "was unable to formulate the criteria by which society, through the teacher, should guide or direct the child's impulses" (1966, 374). As long was Dewey was caught in his earlier conception of growth as realization and fulfillment, Hofstadter was right: teachers had "no directional signposts" for determining which of a child's impulses to encourage and which to try to suppress.

But once Dewey had replaced the growth as realization model with the growth as harmonious work of art, then what? How are teachers and parents to use this new criteria to determine educational ends? Surely, Dewey's revised theory still does not offer an absolute set of goals which apply to all children for all time. The theory of education which emerges from this aesthetic conception of ends must still remain "open" in the sense of being subject to local interpretation and variation. To have a theory which precludes such variation or provides universal and absolute educational guidance would be to directly contradict Dewey's most heartfelt educational values. His theory emphasizes the importance of choice, deliberation, imagination, and the kind of aesthetic valuation which many absolutists find uncomfortable.

The notion that each individual has a multitude of potentialities which become operational only when opportunities are available for exposure to specific features of the environment retains the open conception of education for which Dewey strove in *Democracy and Education* and elsewhere in his writings. It does not remove the obligation for each individual—as well as her parents, teachers, and peers—to imagine the ideal ends which are pertinent to both personal and environmental conditions. For contemporary schools to meet the challenge posed by this obligation, some way must be found for youngsters to increase their ability to imagine pertinent ideal ends. This—not the standardized attainment of universal academic goals—ought to be the primary function of schooling.

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